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MUSIC

James Intveld played to scores of quiff-headed boys and pony-skirted girls. The Blasters, of course, played an important role in the roots and revival scenes, though their urgent energy placed them above being mere musical historians. Top Jimmy seemed to play at least once a week, every week, and it's surprising that the city's best known drunk and blues shouter hasn't cut any vinyl yet. James Harman, Beachy & the Beachnuts, Phast Phreddie and Thee Precisions, Jack Mack & the Heart Attack, and Hunt Sales echoed a few decades of rhythm & blues traditions, dealing in styles that ranged from Chicago to Memphis to Motown. The paradox in this is that the most visible black musicians, the Busboys and Roach, were playing pop and hard rock. Billy Sheets threw in some theater and a bottle of Louisiana hot sauce to spice up his rock-a-zydeco skank and soul revue. But many of these bands seemed consigned to the club treadmill, with true originals like the Sheiks of Shake languishing in popularity limbo.

Maybe the most whimsical revival was Phranc's one-woman attempt to resurrect folk music, providing such nice moments as Exene singing Wanda Jackson tunes and Tito Larriva of the Plugz crooning Spanish ballads at Phranc's Acoustic Night marathons.

1981 was definitely the year of the Go-Go's. Though the girls started the season off by dumping a founding member, bassist Margot Olavera (a move that hardly endeared them to long-time fans), the Go girls shortly signed with IRS and turned out *Beauty and the Beat*. At year end, the record had gone gold — and is still on the national charts — and the group had set a house record for selling out the Greek Theater, toured America and Europe non-stop, had their faces in everything from *Creem* to *People*, and topped it all with a Grammy nomination for best new artists. Whether the Go-Go's can keep up the momentum depends on their second album: here's hoping they don't wind up as this year's Knack.

around here.

Part of the new wave cutesy syndrome can be attributed to KROQ and their rotating schedule of top 40 novelty records. But for those with more adventurous tastes, there was KPFK on Saturday nights (with and without Richard Meltzer), KNAC in Long Beach, and Loyola's KXLU providing variety and exposure to the more unconventional musical experimentalists.

This was also the year girls got out grandma's lace blouses and boys played at being Captain Hook: the Veil — a New Romantic-inspired twice-weekly fraternity — was a silly fun fashion dance party for a few months. Some might grumble about it being just another form of disco, but the Veil dance nights actually helped establish two important new venues:

photo by Karen Filter

photo by Ed Colver

SuperHeroines (top right), *Wild Kingdom* (top center), *T.S.O.L.* (left)

Speaking of the Knack, they made a valiant attempt at a comeback this year — but it didn't take. As for the glut of Knack inspired power sop bands that once gave a wimpy impression of the L.A. scene to outsiders, it seems people are finally figuring out what's right and real about L.A. In short, the days of Sue Saad & the Next are behind us. Then again, maybe not — all one has to do is look at the hopelessly contrived new wave rip-off by Missing Persons or the hyper-thyroid antics of Oingo Boingo to realize how shallow things can still get.

Cathay de Grande and Club Lingerie.

Most explosively, this was the year of the punks — both the hardcore and ghoul variety. The H.C.'s had Black Flag, who achieved their goal of being the Number One punk band by constantly touring, promoting and headlining venues like the Santa Monica Civic and Olympic. After finding the perfect front-man, Henry Rollins, the band recorded *Damaged*, a harsh, brutal sonic assault. It's surprising how many critics have jumped on the Flag-ship, figuring all those kids must know something they didn't.

Other punkers making strong showings included TSOL, the Circle Jerks, Social Distortion and Red Cross. Of course, there was one small problem: the bands had no place to play. By year's end, after riots at Bard's Apollo and the Polish Hall caused places like the Whisky to ban hardcore groups, it looked as though the kids were all thrashed up with nowhere to go. But the opening of Godzilla's, in the Valley, has given punk a new home, at least for the moment.

A variation on the skinheads were the various gothic rockers making every night Halloween. (Of course, by year's end, death, black candles and the occult were as much a cliche as safety pins and anarchy.) 45 Grave was the most prominent of the hell music mongers; the Boneheads played it all for laughs, while Christian Death and the Super Heroines were *dead* serious. Also in the gothic vein, but in a different music camp, was the primal blues punk shouting of Jeffrey Lea Pierce and his Gun Club, and Chris D.'s Flesheaters Artaud-A-Go-Go. Skirting the edges of punk and mortville, the Middle Class took their time and gradually developed into a serious contender in the new music sweepstakes, while the funny Urinals became the serious 100 Flowers, running their own label, Happy Squid, on the side.

As it is with all years, 1981 was invariably a time of goodbyes. Locally, Tim Hardin, Bob Hite and the Dickies' Chuck

photo by Peggy Photo

Wagon left us, while internationally Bob Marley left a gap in the reggae world that couldn't be filled. L.A.'s pioneering punk band the Weirdos finally called it quits, while pre-adolescent 15-minute wonders Mad Society decided dirt bikes were better than kiddie punk.

But on a brighter note, it was a bountiful period for local labels: IRS did the most for promoting the scene by releasing records by the Go-Go's, Suburban Lawns, Oingo Boingo and Wall of Voodoo, and IRS subsidiaries like Time Coast and Faulty put out important local documents by the Alleycats and Bpeople, while signing the Circle Jerks for a second thrash epic. Slash may have lost X to Elektra, but they're doing just fine with the Blasters, thank you, and seem determined to become an important label in their own right; at present, they're preparing a new release by Fear. Posh Boy managed to find bands almost as soon as they were formed and, in terms of documenting local groups, possibly put out more product than any other label. Frontier initially gained its reputation as a punk label but tried something different with the post-punk oriented Choir Invisible. The Plugz hoped for *Better Luck* with their Fatima label, and Bomp made a deal with Sire to promote the excellent Unknowns and handed Josie "Are You Queer" Cotton over to Elektra. Black Flag's SST label turned out two unique local records by the overlooked and underrated Minutemen and Saccharine Trust.

But this wouldn't be Hollywood without the hype. Experts at playing with the press included Twisted Roots, attempting to convince everyone they were the next big thing after playing all of four or five shows. There's a lot of promise to the group, but the jury is still out on the final verdict. Choir Invisible also tried to establish a reputation with minimal gigging, but even though they play new psychedelia as well as anyone and have gained critical support, it's hard to tell what kind of staying power they'll have. And no project was more anticipated, and a bigger flop, than the ill-planned "Palace of Variety" disaster, the swan song of the Screamers.

Believe it or not, it was also the year of heavy metal. It didn't matter if kids in London town were salsa crazy, the locals still believed in the "rock & roll party ethic." The most visible of the hard rockers were Motley Crue, the kings of hair-do rock, wearing

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